

Statement by the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) to ITTO 48th Session held in Yokohama, Japan from 5 – 10, 2012

Distinguished Chair, Honourable Ministers, Executive Director, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

CSAG would like to thank the Government of Japan and the City of Yokohama for hosting this Council. CSAG acknowledges the important milestone that ITTO has crossed at this 48th session - the first to be held under the ITTA 2006.

In support of the ITTA 2006, and as ITTO membership continues to attract new members, CSAG urges all those members who have not ratified the Agreement to do so as soon as possible. ITTO is the only international body that has the sustainable management of tropical forests and sustainable trade in tropical timber as its mandate. Hence the role of the organisation remains highly relevant.

We **noted** good progress has been made by members in meeting the ITTO objectives over the past 25 years and commend the governments responsible. However we note with concern too that there is much to be done in improving lives of the local communities and indigenous populations to be in line at least with the UN Millennium Development Goals, particularly concerning human rights, livelihoods and poverty alleviation. Over the coming years we hope governments responsible can help to address these situations in their implementation of ITTA 2006.

CSAG **recommends** that ITTO continue to expand its work and influence on reforming policy and governance reforms in order to address the new global challenges and capture emerging opportunities to promote sustainable forest management, social and economic development. These governance and institutional challenges, including tenure rights which were also brought up at the side event by the Forest Dialogue this Council session, must be addressed in order for countries to move forward. ITTO should more fully utilize its credibility and convening power to help countries understand and address these challenges.

The ITTO Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forest ITTO was last published in 1990, and since then the Guidelines has been overtaken in parts by increased knowledge, and the emergence of a wide range of new challenges and opportunities for tropical forest management. We **recognize and support** the important role of the Council in providing the highest quality guidance for its member countries in responding to these changes, and the investment and effort that has gone into the production of the revised Guidelines. The failure to adopt these revised, voluntary Guidelines risks the Council becoming irrelevant in the face of changing climactic conditions and associated global dialogues and commitments. We **note** that individual member countries are also facing new challenges and opportunities and they need to re-examine decisions taken in the past in the light of these.

We **acknowledge** that many member countries are still coming to grips with the implementation of the 1990 Guidelines. Council and Secretariat have a **responsibility** to share and promote the experiences and cases from member countries where progress towards the highest standard of sustainable forest management is being demonstrated for the benefit of all Council members. The time is now right for recommendations and actions to strengthen sustainable forest management taken as a result of past missions by ITTO to member countries to be reviewed so that lessons can be shared in terms of best practices, gaps and weaknesses that need to be addressed and new challenges to be faced.

We **encourage** ITTO to ensure alignment of the Biennial Work Programme, the Thematic Programmes and regular project cycles to the ITTO Strategic Action Plan as these are the key pillars for the implementation of the Plan. We further encourage ITTO to adopt the recommendations of the review of the Effectiveness of the Operation of the Thematic Programme (ITTC XLVIII)/10) and to effectively launch and fund all the Thematic Programmes. CSAG looks forward to working with ITTO in the implementation of the Thematic Programmes.

CSAG **encourages** ITTO to give more attention to the nature and extent of participation processes and the context for empowerment of stakeholders in formulating, approving, implementing and evaluating its projects, especially those of short duration. In selecting short term projects, preference should be given to those that add value to existing and longer-term empowerment processes, and the most effective participatory mechanisms for the specific level of participation. This will ensure that participation is not perceived just as an issue of attendance but an issue of engagement and a central part of a key long-term process that leads to better and

lasting results. CSAG is concerned that there may not have been social expertise in the project proposal evaluation teams to review the projects, during audits and final evaluation of completed projects. This comes across strongly in many of the presentations on projects in the Committees sessions. CSAG is pleased to **offer** our assistance in such evaluations, especially at the proposal stage.

CSAG **encourages** Council to adopt the proposed new Thematic Programme on Biodiversity to present a platform for the implementation of the ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative to Conserve Tropical Forest. This initiative in whatever form that Council finally decides will help ITTO to support work on NTFP, which Council has expressed concerns repeatedly in many of your deliberations. New tools such as the FairWild Standards for sustainable management of wild-harvested plants and their trade of non-timber forest products are available. We are drawing attention to the new Toolkit for implementation of the CBD's Global Strategy for Plants Conservation that contributes to the delivery on Aichi Biodiversity Targets and provides practical approaches to SFM.

CSAG fully **support** the call of TAG for ITTO to relaunch the MIS reports and continue to fund the TFU to ensure that market information continues to be available for trade, intelligence and awareness. This is a unique service of ITTO which cannot be replaced by other institutions and should cover NTFPs as well.

CSAG notes with concern the downsizing of the Secretariat due to funding constraint as the ITTO starts to implement the new ITTA 2006. We strongly **encourage** Council to consider the impact this may have on the operations of ITTO, project support and the many services that the Secretariat has provided including to civil society and find ways to mitigate and adapt to the impacts this will have on efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat and to innovate new fundraising activities.

Finally, as we have recommended at the last few ITTC sessions, to ensure that the Council takes full advantage of and benefits fully from the knowledge, experience and expertise available in CSAG, we strongly **recommend** that the ITTC include a formal presentation by CSAG in the ITTC sessions, just as is the modality with the Annual Market event organized by TAG.

We look forward to taking an active role with the Council and Secretariat to ensure the success of ITTO.
Thank you for your support and substantive deliberations.

Co-Chairs

Chen Hin Keong, TRAFFIC, Producer Country co-chair and official contact person for CSAG

Augusta Molnar, Rights and Resources Institute (RRI), Consumer Country Co-chair

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